

MENOPAUSE POLICY

Introduction

We recognise that for some employees the menopause will have an adverse impact on their working lives. However, menopause is not just an issue for women. All staff should be aware of the menopause and familiarise themselves with this policy so that they can support those going through it or who are otherwise affected by it. This policy sets out our approach to dealing with workplace issues relating to the menopause. For the purpose of this policy, any reference to the menopause includes the perimenopause.

Aims of this policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Inform managers and employees about the menopause and associated rights in order to raise awareness.
- Reduce sickness absence and to support staff whose performance is impaired due to menopausal symptoms in order to increase productivity and well-being and to retain valued staff in the workplace.
- Create an environment where female staff members feel confident enough to raise issues about their symptoms and ask for support and adjustments at work.
- Promote the well-being and health of all employees.
- Offer assistance and advice to employees who need it by:
 - encouraging health and well-being conversations between managers and staff;
 - putting in place regular reviews with the employee's line manager for additional support, if required; and
 - offering reasonable workplace adjustments and, where required, actively encouraging employees with symptoms that impact their work life to seek appropriate help by encouraging the employee to speak to their GP in the first instance and signposting the employee to appropriate sources of help and advice (see below 'External links for advice, training and support').

What is the menopause

The menopause is a natural event in women's lives during which they stop having periods and experience hormonal changes such as a decrease in oestrogen levels. It usually occurs between the ages of 45 and 55 and typically lasts between four and eight years. However, each woman's experience will differ, and menopausal symptoms can occasionally begin before the age of 40. It may also occur as the effect of a medical condition or following surgery or a medical procedure. Those who experience menopausal symptoms can include trans, intersex and non-binary people. Perimenopause, begins several years before menopause and can involve similar symptoms to the menopause itself. Women may start to experience menopausal symptoms during the final two years of perimenopause.

Symptoms of the menopause can include, but are not limited to, sleeplessness, hot flushes, night sweats, recurrent urinary tract infections, fatigue, memory loss or poor concentration, headaches, muscle and joint pains, heavy periods, depression and anxiety.

Each of these symptoms can vary in severity and can affect an employee's well-being, attendance and performance at work.

Support and adjustments

While many who go through the menopause will be able to carry on their working lives as normal, we recognise that others may benefit from adjustments to their working conditions to help them better manage the impact of menopause symptoms on their work.

Staff who believe that they would benefit from adjustments or other support, should speak to their line manager in confidence in the first instance. If they feel unable to do so, they should speak to another manager of their choice.

Physical adjustments could include temperature control, provisions of electric fans or access to rest facilities and adjustments to the dress code where reasonable. Depending on individual and business needs, adjustments such as flexible working, more frequent rest breaks or changes to the work role or task allocation may also be considered where these can be accommodated. These are examples only and not an exhaustive list. Any adjustments requested will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with consideration given as to whether we may reasonably accommodate the requested adjustment based on business considerations and the practicality of implementing the adjustment at the time. Any agreed adjustments should be kept under review. Any request to work flexibly will be considered in accordance with our flexible working policy.

We may request your written permission to seek medical advice from your GP or consultant, or to refer you to a doctor or consultant selected by us to better understand any adjustments and other support that may help alleviate symptoms affecting you at work. In that circumstance, we will meet the costs of the medical report.

Staff should refer to our sickness absence and sick pay policy, where they are unable to attend work due to symptoms related to the menopause.

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Discrimination

We seek to provide a work environment in which all employees are treated with respect and dignity and that is free of harassment and bullying based upon age, disability, gender reassignment, race (including colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins), religion or belief, sex and/or sexual orientation. These are known as the 'protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010.

The menopause can, depending on the severity of the symptoms, amount to a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010. Managers must ensure that they do not treat employees less favourably than others as a result of a disability and must also make reasonable adjustments as required to ensure that disabled employees are not disadvantaged as a result of their disability (see above, 'Support and adjustments').

Managers must ensure that employees experiencing the menopause are not indirectly discriminated against. For example, a requirement to wear a uniform made of synthetic fabric, or a uniform that does not permit 'layering' could indirectly discriminate against an employee experiencing regular menopausal hot flushes on grounds of disability, sex and age.

The Equality Act 2010 also prohibits discrimination arising from disability. This is where an employee is treated unfavourably because of something arising as a result of a disability, for example, due to their sickness absence as a result of menopause symptoms, where the symptoms are an impairment which amount to a disability. Unfavourable treatment can be defended if it is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

The Equality Act 2010 also prohibits harassment based on a protected characteristic. Harassment is defined as unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, such as sex, age and disability, that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Employees should draw the attention of their line manager to suspected cases of harassment, bullying or intimidation including in relation to the menopause. Employees are encouraged to raise any concerns with their line manager. Any employee who is found to have bullied or harassed another employee, or discriminated against them in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action under our disciplinary procedure.

Health and safety

We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and will consider making adjustments to any aspects of the working environment that may worsen menopausal symptoms where reasonable and appropriate. This may include identifying and addressing specific risks to the health and well-being of those going through the menopause and putting in place appropriate measures identified by the risk assessment so far as reasonably practical. These may include physical aspects of the working environment such as temperature and ventilation issues, as well as welfare issues; such as ensuring access to toilet facilities, a rest room or quiet space and cold drinking water. The risk assessment may also include ensuring, so far as possible, a safe system of work that does not make menopause symptoms more difficult for the employee to manage.

Employees are also responsible for taking care of their own health and safety and for raising any issues of concern with us. Staff are expected to co-operate with us in the implementation of this policy; in particular by supporting any necessary adjustments put in place for their colleagues as a result of their colleagues' menopausal symptoms and contributing to a respectful and healthy working environment.

Training

We will take such measures as may be necessary to ensure the proper training, supervision and instruction to enable line managers to deal with staff issues relating to the menopause and to raise awareness of this policy with staff. Line managers will be responsible for ensuring they raise awareness of this policy within the departments for which they are responsible.

Data protection

We will process any personal data collected under this policy in accordance with our data protection policy. Data collected in accordance with this policy will only be used by, and disclosed to, individuals for the purposes of providing the necessary support. Inappropriate access or disclosure of personal data will constitute a data breach and should be reported immediately to our Data Protection Officer [Data representative] in accordance with our data protection policy. Reported data breaches will be investigated and may lead to sanctions under the disciplinary procedure.

External links for advice, training and support

Menopause Matters <https://www.menopausematters.co.uk/>

NHS Choices <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/menopause/>

The Daisy Network (support for early menopause/premature ovarian insufficiency)
<https://www.daisynetwork.org/>

Menopause Services NHS GG&C <https://www.sandyford.org/sexual-health-information/fertility/menopause/>

The Menopause Exchange <https://menopause-exchange.co.uk/>

Living Life (Online/Telephone guided CBT) <https://breathingspace.scot/living-life/>

Women's Health concern <https://www.womens-health-concern.org/>

Remploy (mental health support service) <https://www.remploy.co.uk/employers/mental-health-and-wellbeing/workplacemental-health-support-service-employers>

Henpicked (community site for women over 40) <https://henpicked.net/>

Menopause Café (gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss menopause) <https://www.menopausecafe.net/>

Pausitivity (for access to a menopause support pack and posters) <https://www.pausitivity.co.uk/>

Menopause Experts Training <https://www.menopauseexpertstraining.com/>

ACAS guidance on supporting staff through the menopause <https://www.acas.org.uk/menopause-at-work/supporting-staff-through-the-menopause>